



Thanks for your interest in our trade mission to Mexico. As Lt. Governor, it has been my honor and privilege to lead previous trade missions to Central America and to Taiwan and Vietnam. I was proud to repeat that role this year with a 26-member delegation of top-level Indiana food and agribusiness leaders. We traveled to Mexico City, Hidalgo and Veracruz, February 4 – 8, taking every opportunity to showcase the best of Indiana agriculture and learn about our growing economic partner south of the border.

I hope you'll enjoy looking through some of the pictures from our visit and reading about what we were able to accomplish.

Becky Skillman



Lt. Governor Skillman and the 26-member trade delegation received a warm welcome to Mexico City on Monday, February 4.

February 5 – Meeting with U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Antonio O. Garza, Jr.

We just finished meeting with the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Antonio Garza, Jr. at the U.S. Embassy. Mr. Garza grew up in Texas, and his brother-in-law still farms there.

Mexico has a natural affinity for agriculture, much like Indiana. Mr. Garza talked with us about the need for Mexican communities to take a step back and understand that trade with the United States is beneficial for all. We hope that our time here will be well spent in developing the understanding that our products can be complementary, rather than competitive.

Our conversation turned to immigration and the importance of strong international relationships. Mr. Garza told us that he believes the federal government should institute immigration reform, rather than states working on their own legislation.



February 5 – Biotechnology Roundtable

This morning's Biotechnology Roundtable sparked some great discussion. The main focus of the biotechnology debate in Mexico has been on biodiversity and corn. Many environmental and indigenous groups have been opposed to biotech crops, fearing that they may contaminate native corn varieties. These groups have used threats to Mexico's biodiversity and integrity of native varieties as arguments against the introduction of biotech crops.

On a positive note, Mexican consumers are not opposed to food produced from biotech crops. Mexico continues to import significant amounts of biotech-derived agricultural goods from the United States. In 2006 these imports included 7.5 million tons of corn, 3.2 million tons of cracked corn and 3.8 million tons of soybeans.

Don Villwock, President Indiana Farm Bureau, and Ted McKinney, Leader, U.S. Food Chain and State Affairs at Dow AgroSciences, spoke about the history of biotechnology in Indiana and the benefits. Indiana farmers enjoy the benefits of biotechnology, including protecting crops from disease, weed control, increasing crop quality and yield, improving safety and simplifying work.



Lt. Governor Skillman participates in a biotechnology roundtable in Mexico City.



February 5 – La Salle University

This afternoon, we were greeted at Mexico City's La Salle University by Rector Dr. Ambrosio Lunas Salas and the director of their college of Architecture, Jorge Iturbe. Dr. Guillermo Vasquez de Velasco, Ball State University's Dean of Architecture and Planning, joined us as we celebrated the collaboration of the two institutions.

I was honored to take part in an official signing of agreement between Ball State and La Salle. The Memorandum of Understanding will jumpstart a relationship as partners of progress. This agreement will provide a world of opportunities for Indiana and Mexico. I appreciated La Salle University for their kind hospitality, and I look forward to encouraging students around the state to consider studying abroad and seeing for themselves all that Mexico has to offer.



Lt. Governor Skillman joined faculty from Ball State University and La Salle University in Mexico City as they signed an agreement to collaborate.



Lt. Governor Skillman and trade mission delegates receive a tour of Cuenca Dairy Farm in Hidalgo.

February 6 – La Cuenca Dairy, Hidalgo

We just finished a visit to La Cuenca dairy farm in Hidalgo. The farm is very impressive. It is the largest in Latin America and is assembled like a working city. Many of the employees live right on the farm.

The farm is run as a cooperative. Around 80 people own a portion of the farm, and they share staff and technologies. We also learned that the farm buys distillers dried grains (DDG), a byproduct of ethanol production, from Pennsylvania, but Farm Bureau President Don Villwock plans to change that!



Lt. Governor signs a letter of intent with the Governor of Hidalgo, Osorio Chong, to promote and exchange trade, agriculture, technology, education, tourism, environmental protection, intercultural exchanges and other areas of mutual interest.

*February 6 – Meeting Hidalgo
State Officials*

We just finished a meeting with Hidalgo state officials, where we learned about their plans for economic development, infrastructure, agriculture and tourism. I noticed many similarities between our two states, like the quest to promote our tourism industry without any oceanfront. They also have plans for a new airport that will provide an alternative to the busy Mexico City one—similar to the Gary airport's proximity to Chicago.

I was especially interested in the Secretary of Agriculture's remarks on rural development in their state. More than 50 percent of their population lives in rural communities, and a quarter of the population works in agriculture.

Like Indiana, the health of their rural areas is critical for employment and economic development. Their diverse climates allow them to grow a variety of crops, such as alfalfa, barley, cactus and coffee.

I was impressed with the state's strategic initiatives. Good things are happening in Hidalgo!



February 7 – Dale Whittaker: Associate Dean for Academic Programs, Purdue University College of Agriculture

The Autonomous University of Hidalgo is a public, comprehensive university with a mission to improve both the lives and livelihoods of the people of Hidalgo. In that sense, there are a number of similarities with Purdue... There may be excellent opportunities for research collaboration, especially where the unique natural products of Hidalgo are being evaluated for functional attributes like nutritional, anti-cancer, natural insecticides, or antioxidants.

The signing was formal and appeared to be important for the public sector of Hidalgo. I must say that as a representative of the primary university in Indiana from an agriculture perspective, there was great value in having three other state institutions present and involved. This demonstrated a statewide commitment and provided a much broader range of potential partnerships, ranging from human health to community development.

David Bathe and I (as representatives of Ivy Tech and Purdue) have already been invited to a discussion about a community partnership between Indiana and Mexico. My sense is that invaluable partnerships will form among Purdue, Ivy Tech, IU and Ball State, focused on both the University of Hidalgo and Mexican immigrants in Indiana as a result of this mission and the signing.

The signing with one Mexican institution provided focus and a bond. In talking with the Sec. of Education of Hidalgo last night, I became convinced that the state understands the critical role of education in driving economic development of the region in the next decade.



Lt. Governor speaks before representatives from Ball State University, Purdue University, IUPUI and Ivy Tech State College sign a memorandum of understanding with the Autonomous University of Hidalgo.



February 7 – Veracruz



Lt. Governor Skillman is greeted by the Veracruz Secretary of Agriculture.

Today we traveled to the coastal state of Veracruz, known as 'the California of Mexico' for their coastline, diverse landscape and tourism industry.

We started the day meeting with the Veracruz Secretary of Agriculture, where we had a very productive meeting focused on their interest in biofuels production. In Indiana, we know a thing or two about that! He expressed that their biofuels industry has a lot of catching up to do, and that this year they are beginning to pass legislation to promote alternative energy. He was interested to hear that it was just three short years ago that Indiana only had one ethanol plant, and we now have 12 ethanol and 4 biodiesel plants across the state.

Instead of using corn and soybeans to produce biofuels as Indiana does, Veracruz is interested in building sugarcane ethanol plants, as they have an abundance of the crop. Andy Miller, Director of the Indiana Department of Agriculture, offered to help the Secretary's office connect with the appropriate people within the international biofuels community.

We then met with Dr. Carlos Garcia Mendez, the Veracruz Secretary of Economic Development. Like Indiana, his office works to bring new investment to their state. I was struck by the clear advantages Veracruz has in economic development – a thriving tourism industry, successful manufacturing and agricultural sectors, and a first-class port operation. I appreciated my time with Secretary Garcia and I now realize that like in Indiana, the Veracruz state officials are working hard every day to promote their state and bring good jobs to their citizens.



"We have benefited from understanding the unique needs of the Mexican market, our second largest trade partner. In particular, our discussions with Mexican officials have improved Indiana's ability to better serve this market for key products like corn or pork."

~ISDA Director Andy Miller



"Once again I'm impressed with the friendly, kind people we have experienced everywhere we have been. Today we visited a very modern dairy farm in Hidalgo. This farm would match most dairies that we have in Indiana. The leaders of Hidalgo are very open to increasing our trade relationship. I think there are many opportunities that lie ahead."

~Indiana Farm Bureau President Don Villwock



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Trade Mission
to Mexico
February 4 - 8, 2008

Promoting
Hoosier
Agriculture
Abroad

